No. 62

The REDEMPTION of Marie Gordon

THE TRAGIC STORY OF WRONGED WOMANHOOD

Price 10¢

Her lover was gone, and she was alone! Almost overcome with a feeling of impending disaster, she sank into a chair. Her hands clasped desperately.

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THIS TIME Miss Desmond will come to stay." That one sentence kept repeating itself in Alice's disturbed mind over and over again. But there was a wicked glint in her eyes as she vowed that no woman should replace her as the mistress of Oak Manor. She knew the ways and means to prevent that.

Upon his arrival at the office, Gordon at once telephoned the Chicago Daily News and asked them to insert an advertisement for a tutor for his children.

He requested all applicants to state their qualifications in writing and to give reference.

Within three days he had at least twenty letters of application.

After giving all of them consideration, he decided upon a man by the name of James Perry, who claimed to be a student of divinity whose chief aim in life was the training of children.

A personal interview followed, and Mr. Perry was engaged. His coming to Oak Manor did not cause the least ripple of excitement.

There was a conference at which the new tutor, Annie and Gordon only were present.

The master of the house made it understood that Annie was to continue to take care of the children after their studies. Mr. Perry acceded to this.

At the very outset of this arrangement Perry showed great devotion to his duties and won the confidence of his employer.

But he had one bad fault. He was entirely too strict. His method of handling children of tender years were harsh and close to being inhuman.

It was little Harry's misfortune to fall into Mr. Perry's bad graces through an incident that amounted to nothing. The tutor gained the impression that the

boy was antagonistic toward him.

In order to get even he overloaded Harry with work. The boy did not dare complain because his father had told him that he must mind Mr. Perry at all times.

The latter also used every means at his command to curtail Annie's activities so far as the Gordon children were concerned.

He wanted to be the sole factor in developing their moral and spiritual natures.

Harry and Phyllis, while always retaining a attitude of respect toward their teacher, did not like him. Their young hearts yearned for the love such as their former governess had lavished upon them.

Time and again they asked Annie when Miss Desmond would return.

Gordon, believing that the youngsters were in good hands, devoted all his time to business. He came less often to the nursery to play with them.

The first two weeks were not productive of any remarkable results in the education of the two Gordon children. It could be plainly seen that they were unhappy.

One evening Gordon asked the tutor to come to the library. As soon as they were seated, he wanted to know how Harry and Phyllis were progressing.

"Not so well," Perry replied pessimistically. "The children seem to have been neglected so far as intellectual training is concerned. The woman who was employed here as governess before I came evidently knew little about teaching. She seems to have been more of a playmate than a teacher."

Phil Gordon bit his lip. The tutor's remarks about Marie Desmond were very displeasing.

"I have a great deal to thank Miss Desmond, your predecessor for, Mr. Perry," was his grave answer. "If

It were not for her, my boy would not be alive to-day. Considering his delicate health, Miss Desmond could not proceed as rapidly with her instruction as if this had not been the case."

The discussion between them, which did not last long, left the tutor in a rather unpleasant mood. He saw at once that his employer resented his allusion to Marie Desmond.

After that Mr. Perry refrained from further criticism of his predecessor, for whom he conceived an actual hate because the children, to this day, still idolized her.

At first, Alice bestowed but little notice on this new arrival at Oak Manor, but gradually his finely cut features and dark eyes impressed her and occasionally she exchanged greetings with him.

Young Mr. Perry felt encouraged to make further advances, and little by little thoroughly ingratiated himself with her.

She told him quite plainly that Miss Desmond was thoroughly incapable and had taught the children nothing. This naturally flattered the tutor and their intercourse was very friendly.

Mrs. Gordon incited him to hold Harry with a tight rein to break his will, and lent a willing ear to his complaints.

There was no one but Annie who thoroughly understood the pitiable plight of the poor, motherless children.

She fondled them and cared for them to the full of her powers, and when they were alone with her there was but one theme of talk—Miss Desmond.

From time to time the latter wrote some lines to the children which she enclosed in her letters to Annie, and which the girl gave them.

In these Marie told the children to be good, and that she would, perhaps, be with them soon. She could not deprive her darlings of at least this hope.

Harry kept these letters as something sacred. When he was unobserved he brought them out and read them over and over again.

Often his face would become so sad that Annie felt a pang when she saw him.

And yet she must say nothing, for she knew that Alice Gordon disliked her and would be glad of a good reason to discharge her.

Alice had already made the attempt, but Phil, who appreciated Annie's devotion to the children, would not permit it.

One day, Harry did not come to the table. Phyllis sat alone in her place and looked shyly at Mr. Perry.

"Well, where is Harry?" asked Gordon who just entered.

"I have made him stay in his room," was the tutor's answer. "He is terribly obstinate and I think it well that he should be punished severely."

"What has he done?" demanded Phil.

"The children have a cat — a vicious creature," replied Perry with a pious look. "As I was giving them instruction yesterday, the animal sat under the table. I pushed it aside and it attacked me. Pets and playthings interfere with study, and I called a servant to take the cat away.

"At this, Harry became very excited and caught it up and cried. As he would not give it up, it had to be taken away from him. Since then, the boy does not seem to hear what I say, but sits in a corner.

"When I came in the room this morning, he did not give me his hand as usual, but walked away. For this reason I have forbidden him to come to dinner. The

boy has a very obstinate, headstrong disposition."

Phil did not answer. After dinner, when he had sent the little girl out, he said:

"I would prefer that you punish Harry in a milder manner than to deprive him of a meal, Mr. Perry. The boy is too delicate."

The tutor pressed his lips together and bowed silently. He went in to Mrs. Gordon to complain that her husband took the boy's part against him, and thereby made instruction almost impossible.

"You seem surprised," said Alice sarcastically. "I have been accustomed to this sort of thing for a long time, and for that reason I do not trouble myself any more with the brats.

"Their old governess spoiled them thoroughly. She was sly enough to know that this would please my husband. At times I almost hate them."

In the meantime, Phil had gone to the children's room.

He found Harry sitting at the desk looking at an open book before him which, however, he was not reading.

"Harry," said the father sternly, "what do I hear? You have been naughty to Mr. Perry and he has complained about you."

Slowly the child opened his great, sad eyes and looked up at him, and their expression was such that Phil's sterness vanished immediately.

The boy's pale lips quivered, and suddenly a convulsive sob shook his little body.

"He — kicked my kitten — and had her taken away," said Harry, sobbing, "and—I loved her so. Miss Desmond found her on the street. It was sick — and cried — and we took her in and made her well."

While he was speaking the boy's voice became

firmer. He went on:

"She was such fun! Phyllis put her in the carriage with her doll and she lay nice and quiet in the carriage. But Mr. Perry didn't like her. He always kicked her and wouldn't let us play with her, so we always put her out of the room when he came.

"But yesterday she came in while he was teaching, and Mr. Perry stepped on her tail so that she cried. I asked him not to hurt her, and he kicked her. Then I picked up kitty to take her out, but he took her from my hand and threw her at the door and she lay as if dead.

"We cried—Phyllis and I—and Mr. Perry called Tom and told him to throw kitty into the water. I cried and begged him not to kill poor kitty, and when Tom took her away I hated Mr. Perry.

"Oh—" here the boy's eyes sparkled and he raised his little fists, "I didn't want to see him again——"

"And this morning you did not greet him," said the father suppressing his emotion with an effort.

The boy's eyes fell sadly.

"No, daddy, I couldn't. I cried all night for my poor kitten. When I saw Mr. Perry this morning, it hurt me here." He pointed to his heart. "I couldn't go to him, he doesn't like me, I know it.

"One day he said to us, 'you do not seem to have learned much from Miss Desmond. She took things easy and let you do what you liked. You liked that, didn't you?' Then I told him Miss Desmond was very good, she taught us a great deal and was much kinder to us than he!"

"You should not have spoken like that, Harry," said Phil gravely, although it cost him a pang to blame the poor child, for his heart felt for Harry.

"A child should never be unmannerly to older people," he continued. "You should not have answered

Mr. Perry like that. Now you will be a good boy, won't you, and please your father?"

He drew the boy to him and put his head on his shoulder.

"Mr. Perry is not kind to us, daddy," cried the boy softly. "Yesterday he gave me a piece of eight verses to learn. I sat up all evening and my head ached so. But Annie is good to us. Do you know what she did?

"When she heard that Tom was to throw kitty into the pond, she went after him and begged him to give her to somebody in the village. Oh, how glad I am that kitty was not drowned!"

Gordon stroked the boy's curly locks, and an acute pain shot through his heart. More than ever before, he felt how much the children needed their mother or the loving care of a Miss Desmond.

The tutor was an entirely unsuitable man to understand the sensitive boy. He could only torture him and had no thought of winning Harry's affection.

Phil quieted the excited boy and made him promise to be polite and obedient to Mr. Perry in the future. Then he ordered dinner brought for Harry, for he was not willing that the delicate boy should go hungry.

At the same time he resolved to discharge the tutor at the end of his term and take a governess in his place.

A woman, in his opinion, would better know how to manage the children and enter into their affections. Sighing, he left the room.

Oh, to what misery was his life condemned?

Alice's presence in his home made his abode there intolerable. Added to this was his unconquerable and intense longing for Marie.

At times an impulse came over him to throw all

responsibility aside; break the fetters which bound and crushed him, and cast any consideration for others to the winds.

He felt like going after Miss Desmond and implore her to return to him forever and become a mother to his children.

Chapter 204

"YOU DARE?"

HEN ALICE GORDON discharged Nora Nora Evans in order to please her husband, she faced a most disagreeable task. The girl understood the situation very well, and she was not averse to leaving. But she demanded quite a sum as hush money. Alice paid part of it in cash, and the other part in jewelry.

And Nora left with the promise that her lips were forever sealed. However, promises made by a woman of her type are not always kept.

In the circle of her Chicago acquaintances and friends, Nora was regarded as a good fellow. She spent her money freely and usually paid the bill of an all-night party.

Before she became Alice Gordon's confidential maid and spy, she was the member of a gang of crooks and outlaws.

She made no secret of her social status when she was engaged, for she was told plainly by her mistress what would be expected of her.

It is not necessary to recount here the criminal activities this woman of the underworld engaged in at Oak Manor. But she obeyed only the orders of Alice Gordon, whose soul was steeped in crime.

When Nora Evans was paid off in full, her impudent grin should have told Alice that this was not the end between them.

Blackmailing is the favorite method employed by certain gangsters in Chicago. They contrive to "get

something" on some rich society woman, and then she either pays or faces divorce proceedings.

In nearly every case the money demanded is forthcoming at once.

Nora Evans knew very well that if she cared to talk, she could destroy her former mistress.

And when she went broke after a few months of loose living, her thoughts wandered in the direction of Oak Manor.

And so it happened, that one afternoon, as Alice was about to go to the city on a shopping trip, one of the servants came into her boudoir to announce that a visitor had called to see her.

"Who is it?" she demanded with characteristic impatience.

"Nora Evans," was the answer.

Mrs. Gordon's face blanched. But presently she smiled.

Perhaps Nora had come to see her on a friendly call, or perhaps to ask if she might have her position back.

Well, not much chance. Mabel Dallas more than filled Nora's shoes.

"Send Miss Evans up here and I'll have a chat with her," she announced. Then she turned to her new maid. "The girl who is calling on me had your position. I don't know what she is coming for, and I would rather be alone with her. I'll ring when I want you, Mabel."

The latter nodded and quietly left the boudoir.

A moment later Nora entered. She glanced about the room quickly, then approached her former mistress with hands extended.

"Hello, there. Glad to see you!" cried Alice, but she was far from feeling any happiness at this moment. "Sit down, Nora." After a swift and critical survey she

added: "You are not looking so well. Have you been ill?"

The Evans girl shook her head and smiled.

"Never felt better in my life, Mrs. Gordon."

"Well, I am glad to hear that," came back. "Your face has lost much of its color and I feared that——"

"I haven't been eating regularly," broke in Nora, forcing the issue. "I had a little bad luck in betting on the races. I am dead broke and don't know where the next meal is coming from."

Mrs. Gordon betrayed a disturbed mind. She had more than an inkling why Nora had come to pay her a visit.

"I—I am sorry I can't help you out," she stammered as she reached for her purse and hurriedly went through it. "You see, my husband has engaged a new instructor for the children. This additional expense and——"

"That's a fine hard luck story," the Evans girl interrupted with a discordant laugh.

Alice colored slightly, then turned pale.

Nora's attitude and manner of speech were insulting. She had no intention of allowing a discharged servant brow-beat her in her own house.

"Will you be kind enough to tell me why you called?" she said with dignity.

"You bet I will," was the prompt response. "I need some money."

"But I haven't any to give you," Mrs. Gordon declared. "Besides, you promised me when you left that you were quite satisfied with what I gave you then."

"Oh, that was a long time ago," said Nora.

It was difficult for Alice to keep herself under control.

A glance at the girl's face informed her that she

could expect trouble unless the money demanded was forthcoming.

But she was absolutely determined not to submit to deliberate blackmail.

"Really, Nora," she remarked in a conciliatory tone, "you can't expect me to keep on giving you money."

"I did not say I expected you to keep on," was the harsh retort. "Just let me have five hundred now and I'll never bother you again."

Mrs. Gordon whirled upon the speaker.

"Five hundred?" she gasped. "Why, you are mad."

"Not at all, my dear Mrs. Gordon. I am perfectly sane. And I want to tell you that I let you off entirely too easy. What did you give me for doing all the dirty work for you? A few hundred dollars and some second-hand jewelry. I should have had at least five thousand."

"But I paid you a big salary while you were here," argued Alice.

"So you did," the other mocked. "And I earned every penny of it. I want five hundred in spot cash right now."

The fact of the matter was that Alice did not have that amount to call her own.

Since her last disagreement with Phil she could no longer draw on his account. He paid all the bills but gave her little ready cash.

At that, she would have shared what she had with Nora Evans if the latter had not made the demand in such an impudent manner.

"I won't give anything like five hundred dollars now, nor at any future time," she told her with flashing eyes.

"You better pay me now, or you'll regret it," Nora

threatened.

"Why will I regret it?" asked Mrs. Gordon coolly.

"I'll tell your husband what kind of a woman you are," the girl shot back. "And I won't stop at that. I'll tell him a story that will open his eyes. And I'll get your sister Betty to back me up."

"Will you?" Alice laughed. "I suppose you don't know that my sister died in New York."

Surprise was marked on the girl's features.

"Well, I don't really need any one to back me up," she said, slanting an ugly look at her former mistress. "Mr .Gordon will believe me alone."

"Go and tell him!" Alice challenged. "You haven't the nerve. He'd throw you out bodily if you enter his office. You know very well that he had no use for you. And what's more, he has your pedigree. He knows where you come from, and what kind of a life you led before you came here as my maid."

Nora Evans flushed darkly. She accepted the challenge with a diabolical grin.

"Alright," she said as she rose. "I'll take you at your word. I'll chance being thrown out of his office, for that is where I am going right now."

With that she walked from the boudoir and slammed the door behind her.

Alice made no attempt to call her former maid back. Let her go to Phil and talk. He would give her a cold turndown before she had an opportunity to start her tale.

Quite confident that this was the end of the matter, she proceeded on her shopping tour.

That night when her husband came home, she gave him a swift, searching glance.

Not a single word did he say to her as they ate dinner with the children and Mr. Perry, the tutor.

Not until the evening meal was over did he address her.

"I have something to say to you, Alice," he said. "Please come with me into the library."

She followed him, her heart beating with conflicting emotions. The black face presaged trouble.

Taking it for granted that Nora Evans had made good her threat, and that Phil had listened to her, Alice waited for him to speak with her lips pressed firmly together.

"Your former maid called on me this afternoon," he began, leaning against the table.

"Oh, did she?" Alice replied with forced cheerfulness. "What for?"

"To tell me a story."

"And you listened?"

"Not very long. It wasn't necessary, for I knew practically everything that girl came to tell me. But I hushed her up by paying her a neat sum of money." Gordon paused a moment. "Nora Evans is a dangerous woman. She is the kind who stop at nothing.

"But before I paid her, I made her sign an agreement that she would hold her tongue so far as you are concerned. This Nora Evans is rather a shrewd blackmailer and not at all modest in her demands. Well, I paid because it was the only thing to do."

"How much did you give her?" Alice inquired.

"I gave her a check for two thousand dollars," he told her.

"You fool!" The word came with a hiss.

"Yes," said Phil quietly. "I plead guilty to being a fool. I was a fool when I married you. I was a fool when I thought you had a soul. I was a fool when I consented to the discharge of a woman whose garment you are not fit to touch.

"Yes," he added with a groan, "I have been a fool all my life. "There can be no peace, no happiness until you get out of this house. You have made my existence nothing less than a living hell.

"I'll give you anything you want!" he cried, his voice vibrating with sudden passion. "I'll pay you any amount up to a hundred thousand dollars, if you leave my house peacably. If you don't accept that I'll force you to go."

A look of defiance flashed in his wife's eyes.

"There isn't enough money in the world to make me leave this house now," she returned insolently. "Oh, yes, I know you'd like to be rid of me so you can have your own way with this Desmond woman.

"But you can't order me away like an ordinary servant. I won't stand for it, Phil Gordon. I won't stand for it, and that's that."

Gordon stood with his hands clenched.

"I have every right to order you from my house!" he shot back, his voice like the rumbling thunder. "Nothing but consideration for your poor old father has influenced me on the one hand, and dread of public scandal on the other. But your father is dead now and I need not consider him any longer.

"You — you question my right to order you away!" he went on, his teeth snapping. "What have you ever done to deserve the shelter of a respectable home? What right had you to ever aspire to become an honest man's wife?

"What right had you to become a mother? Your character is lower than that of that gutter snipe whom I paid two thousand dollars hush money. She was your confidential maid, your bosom chum. Ah, what a splendid match you two made."

Every word Phil spoke in his towering rage, stung

Alice like a lash of the whip.

She shrank back, her face white, her eyes spitting fire. Every atom of her pride rebelled.

"You — you dare tell me that?" she screamed. "You dare?"

"That is not half of it!" her husband declared, raising himself to his full height. "I have played the gentleman in your presence too long. You don't deserve it. I am going to talk to you exactly as I talked to Nora Evans. You belonged to her class—yes, you are a step lower."

Utterly beside herself with rage, Alice sprang at Phil and struck with both hands. Then, with a scream, she fell in a heap on the floor.

Chapter 205

BAD NEWS

THEY CARRIED the mistress of Oak Manor up the stairs like one dead. The physician who was hurriedly summoned, had considerable trouble in bringing the woman back to consciousness. Alice was plainly hysterical and nothing else. She shrieked at the top of her voice and tore the bed clothing until she was given an opiate to quiet her.

Philip Gordon, in the library, awaited the doctor's verdict coldly. This time he had refused to be fooled by his wife's antics.

He had just finished putting some arnica on the scratch inflicted in his left cheek by Alice's sharp finger nails.

"I don't think there is any cause for alarm, Mr. Gordon," the man of medicine told him. "Your wife's nerves are a little unstrung. A few hours' sleep will cure that."

"Thanks," Phil said with an ironical smile.

After the physician had gone, he sat down at his desk. A moment later the telephone rang.

"Bad news for you, sir," came his legal adviser's voice from the other end of the line. "There has been a sudden general decline in the copper stock you ordered me to buy for you. What shall I do, sell out or hold it?"

Phil swore softly under his breath. This news took on the form of a calamity.

Nearly all of his surplus money was tied up in these stocks. Absolute financial ruin stared him in face. For the moment he was at a loss how to answer his legal

adviser.

"What is responsible for the drop?" he inquired in a voice he hardly recognized as his own.

"A strike at the mines," came back. "I suggest that you make a quick trip to Montana and investigate. There is still a chance that a crash may be averted, if quick action is taken."

It did not take Gordon long to make up his mind. He held the controlling interest in the mines and he had a perfect right to start an investigation and he intended to do so at once.

"I'll leave on the first train in the morning for Montana," he said decisively. "As soon as I have some information worth while, I'll wire you. In the meantime don't sell."

That ended the telephone conversation.

The following morning the newspapers were filled with news of the disaster. A general strike at the copper mines was given as the main reason for the utter collapse of the industry and the consequent drop in the price of stock.

Gordon smiled grimly as he read word for word. One trouble after another was being heaped upon him by perverse luck.

He realized instantly that only drastic action could save the situation at the mines. With all possible haste he prepared for his trip to the copper mines in Montana. Before he left the house, he had a chat with Annie.

"Take the best of care of the children while I am gone," he said to the faithful girl. "You have never disappointed my confidence in you. And Harry particularly will need your attention. See if you can't straighten out the difficulty between him and Mr. Perry."

"I'll do the best I can gladly," the girl answered with a great deal of feeling. "While you are away you needn't worry about the children, sir."

"I—I am grateful to you for the splendid service you have rendered since—since my first wife left," remarked Gordon, his voice singularly soft. "It hurts me to see my children abused. If, in your judgment, Mr. Perry is unreasonable harsh in his treatment, I want to know about it."

"Harry was not to blame for the trouble," was Annie's quick retort. "I don't think Mr. Perry is fit to train young children."

Gordon did not reply at once.

While he agreed with what the girl said about the tutor, he did not feel inclined to add to the controversy by siding with her. Mr. Perry had been engaged by the month. He could not very well discharge him until the month was up.

"Well, you keep an eye on the man and especially the children," he said. "I'll feel easier during my trip if you'll do that."

The girl assured him again that she would, and Gordon went to bid good-by to the youngsters. It was pathetic indeed the way they clung to him. Both were close to tears.

"Will you come back soon, daddy?" the boy asked uneasily.

"I'll be back as quickly as I can," the father responded as he kissed Harry. "And you'll try to be a good boy, won't you."

"Yes, daddy."

Phil saw tears glistening in little Phyllis' eyes. He gathered her to his breast and hugged her. Then he put her down and ran from the room.

An hour later the tutor came into the study room

It was easy to be seen that he was in an ugly mood. He became irritated at the slightest provocation.

He was unnecessarily severe with Harry. When the latter failed to answer a question promptly Mr. Perry flew into a rage.

"Look here, young man," he scolded, "I am about tired of your indifference. I want you to listen to me while I am talking. What is the matter with you? Are you deaf?"

"No, sir, I am not deaf," the boy replied, his face turning crimson. "Had you spoken a little plainer I would have understood you."

The tutor's anger was fierce, and he seemed about to strike Harry. It was with a visible effort that he controlled the impulse. He threw down the book he was holding and snarled:

"So, you are getting impudent, eh? For that you will copy this whole line of verses and learn them by heart. I'll take some of that impudence out of you before we get through. Get down to work now and answer my questions instantly."

Harry's face was no longer crimson. It had turned white. During the two long hours of study he demeaned himself with utmost respect toward his instructor.

When he complained of having a headache, Mr. Perry laughed at him. The latter accused him of laziness and being a shrewd little liar.

The afternoon, which was to have been one of play, he was compelled to spend in the study room. He sat at his desk copying a long string of verses, the meaning of which he scarcely understood.

This done, he commenced to memorize them. Although his head ached, he did not hesitate for a moment but kept on manfully.

When a few moments later Annie came into the

room, she found the boy in tears.

"Why, what is the matter?" she cried, patting his wet cheek.

He told his story amid another shower of tears.

"I was not to blame," he sobbed. "And because I told Mr. Perry to speak a little plainer, he punished me with these verses. And I have such a headache."

Annie comforted the unhappy lad as best she could.

Ah, how her heart ached for this motherless boy. But she was powerless to change matters in the Gordon household.

She vowed, however, to protect both of the children so far as she could.

"Did you tell Mr. Perry that you had a headache, Harry?" she inquired.

Harry nodded.

"Mr. Perry said he didn't believe me, and that it was a lie and that I was too lazy and was always ready with excuses.'

The child began to cry anew.

Annie was in despair. The tutor was upstairs taking coffee in company of Alice Gordon. What did he care whether Harry suffered or not?

As the evening came on, Annie took the book away from Harry.

"I will not have you ruin your eyes," she said. "My God, how your forehead burns! You must stop studying for the day."

The boy shook his head.

"No, Annie, I do not know my piece yet, and to-morrow I must recite it to Mr. Perry."

Annie submitted the book to the boy reluctantly.

Harry took up his book again. The poor boy struggled on with his work.

Finally he fell asleep over the book later in the evening, and was so exhausted that he did not awaken even when Annie undressed him and put him to bed.

The next morning he was unable to recite all the piece. Mr. Perry was very angry.

"Of course, you have again been too lazy to study," he accused. "Isn't that true?"

"Mr. Perry," the boy began to explain, "I studied all afternoon and evening, Annie saw me, and I had an awful headache."

Crack! Crack! Harry's ears were boxed. It was a terrible shock for the lad and he cried bitterly.

As the tutor came again with a new question, he was utterly unable to answer.

"Ah! now you are sulking too," cried Perry, now in a violent temper, and was about to strike Harry again.

At this moment, Alice entered.

"What has happened, Mr. Perry?" she inquired. "Has Harry again given you cause for vexation?"

"It is simply impossible to get on with the boy," the man replied. "Do you suppose he has learned the piece I gave him yesterday? Not at all. He has all sorts of lying excuses and finally he refuses to even answer my questions."

"This is very annoying," cried Alice. "But I know the children, I have gone throug enough on their account. They are thoroughly spoiled."

Turning to the boy, she commanded:

"You apologize to Mr. Perry on the spot, for your dirty lies!"

Harry did not rise.

"Now then, will you do it, blockhead!" cried Alice, tearing him out of his seat by the arm. "Wait, I will drive out your temper! Apologize at once!"

"I did not lie," sobbed the boy. "I had a headache.

Annie knows it."

"Then you will not apolize? Very well, you must be punished," hissed Alice.

Going close to the tutor, she spoke to him in a whisper. Perry's features brightened with satisfaction.

"That is a good idea," he nodded. "That will tame him in short order."

"This afternoon you will be punished," said Alice to the boy, rustling out.

To begin with, in spite of Mr. Gordon's injunctions, Harry was deprived of his mid-day meal.

Then, in the afternoon, while he was sitting in a corner in anxious fear over the threatened punishment, his step-mother, followed by the tutor, suddenly came into the room.

Annie had been sent on an errand and it was with great reluctance that she had taken the order, for she did not like to leave the children out of her sight. Alice now had no interference.

With flashing eyes, she stepped up to Harry.

"Now, young man, you will be punished. Come with me!" Her lips parted in a fiendish smile.

Trembling, the boy arose and went with them into the corridor.

To his fright, Harry realized that he was being taken to a side wing of the Manor at the end of which there was a dark chamber that was not in use except by the chimney-sweep who would go through the sky-light to get on to the roof to do his work.

This dark hole—probably from association with the idea of the weird, black figure of the chimney-sweep—was the dread of the children.

They avoided it whenever it was possible and always ran when they had to pass it.

To Harry's great dismay, Alice now opened the

door of the chamber.

"Now, young man, go in there!" she ordered. "Here you will have time to think over your obstinacy and bad manners."

Harry shrieked aloud and held fast to the door-post in desperation.

"Oh, don't put me in there," he sobbed, "I will be good, very good, but don't put me in there—in the black room!"

Alice laughed heartlessly. She knew she had hit upon the worst torture for the child.

Brutally, Mr. Perry grasped the boy under the arms and pushed him forcibly into the darkness.

Harry uttered a piercing scream.

"Now, my boy, you will learn to behave," cried the tutor, banging the door. Again the boy within gave a loud shriek.

He struck the door with his hands and cried heart-rendingly:

"Oh, please open the door, Mr. Perry, I will be good—I will be good! I will die in here—it is so dark—I'm afraid—oh—I am afraid——" He sobbed pitifully, but neither Mrs. Gordon nor the tutor were touched by his plaints.

"Come away, Mr. Perry," said Alice. "That will be a lesson he will not soon forget, and he will not dare to contradict you again. He can be cured of his obstinacy only by such violent means."

Inhumanly she walked away without concerning herself further about the poor child.

Harry was in a tremor of fear. He held his face pressed to the door so as not to see the awful darkness which surrounded him.

Pitiable lamentations rose from his lips, he was in mortal terror.

Old ghost stories which he had heard came to his mind. In his excited phantasy, he heard a queer noise; threatening spirits crowded about him and seemed to clutch him and he screamed wildly.

Again and again he beat at the door with his hands, but no one came to open it. Cold sweat ran down his brow; his teeth chattered as in a fever, and the delicate little body trembled like an aspen leaf.

"Oh, daddy — Annie ——" he cried, moaning loudly, his fright and terror becoming greater and greater.

Was not that a crunching near him? What was it — a ghost? Oh — the horrible thing was stretching out its hand toward him—a cold hand was on his shoulder—it was a ghost—it would crush him—kill him!

"Oh—oh!" A blood-curdling cry rang through the chamber and the child fell senseless, striking his head on the stone floor.

Now all was still—deathly still. The spirits and shadows could flit around undisturbed, they frightened the child no more.

Hour after hour passed, all unnoted. The dusk enveloped the earth in its shadows; here and there lights sprang up in the rooms of the mansion.

Little Phyllis sat alone in the nursery, no one bothered about her — Annie was still away.

With large, frightened eyes, the little girl had seen her brother led away by her step-mother and the tutor.

She had slipped to the door and opened it softly to see where they were taking him. They were going further and further.

Then she heard a scream, and she knew where they had taken him—the black room!

The little one stood as if stunned and listened.

Her step-mother and the tutor came back again, passing her, but after a while everything was quiet.

Phyllis was frightened. Harry in the dark room where there were ghosts — spirits! Oh, what would happen to him?

The trembling child slipped back to her place and cried bitterly. She dared not leave the room for fear of attracting the attention of her step-mother who would perhaps punish her also.

No one came to bring her supper. She listened breathlessly for another cry from Harry, but all was still. He must be dead!

Full of fear, the little girl closed her eyes. She was so tired that she could not even cry any more.

Then came the evening with its gloom. Finally she fell asleep and the little head sank against the wall.

Towards seven o'clock, Annie came back from her errand. She had hurried in order to return as early as possible.

As she approached the mansion, her first look went to the windows of the nursery.

"What! No light?" she murmured. "I hope the children are not sitting in the dark—perhaps they are in the dining room."

As soon as she reached the house and disposed of her parcels, she rushed to the nursery. She opened the door. All quiet—they could not be here! The dining room too, was empty. Annie became very uneasy.

She asked the chambermaid about the children, but the girl had not seen them. Again Annie went back to the nursery. This time she turned on the light and now she saw the little girl sleeping in the corner.

With a cry of dread, she hurried to Phyllis.

"My God!" she muttered, "no one has looked after the children. They have not even had a light and this

little thing has fallen asleep in the dark. Where can Harry be?"

She raised the little girl who opened her eyes but closed them again. The child was tired out.

Annie bore her to the bed room. Harry's bed, too, was empty. The boy was nowhere to be seen.

While she was undressing Phyllis, the child became wakeful. At first she seemed to be talking in her sleep and murmured as in fear:

"Don't put him in the black room—Mr. Perry and mamma—and now he is dead!"

With an exclamation of horror, Annie put Phyllis down, stormed to the door and raced down the corridor towards the "black" room.

The key was outside in the lock. Tearing the door open and about to enter the chamber, she stumbled against an object on the ground. She bent down: her hand touched a body and her shrieks rang through the room.

It was Harry—motionless and still. Like a corpse he lay before the girl.

Almost beside herself with excitement, she took him up in her arms and hurried with him to the nursery.

As she stepped into the circle of light, she saw the waxy, set features of the boy. But what was that she saw! Blood-clots on the hair on the back of his head!

In deathly fear, she lay the boy on a couch and rushed to the bell to call help by constant ringing.

They came from all sides; among the last Mrs. Gordon and the tutor.

"What are you making such a noise about?" demanded Mrs. Gordon of Annie. "What is the matter with you?"

Annie pointed to the motionless boy.

"There—look—look—Harry!"

As she saw the blood on the back of Harry's head, Alice could not forego a start, but she continued as if annoyed:

"Don't be so silly. The boy must have fallen."

"You locked him in the "black" room!" cried Annie losing self-control. "Oh, why was I so foolish as to leave him? What will Mr. Gordon say when he comes home? Quick Tom, send for Dr. Van Buren!"

Tom went, while Alice broke out angrily:

"What are you doing, Annie; you act as if you were running this house. It is for me to say if Dr. Van Buren is to be sent for. Put the boy to bed. This is one of his usual fits."

Nevertheless she thought it necessary to exchange some words with the tutor.

This matter would be very unpleasant when Phil returned. They were somewhat downcast when they left the room.

Annie hardly noticed them: she busied herself with Harry until at last Dr. Van Buren came

As briefly as she could, Annie related what had happened. He was horrified by the story.

This tender plant which he had only so lately wrested from the cold hands of death—to be so ruthlessly broken! This day might have some terrible consequences, who could know?

The bruise on the boy's head was not serious—it would soon heal, but the possible effects of the fright and shock which the child had suffered, could not be foreseen.

Dr. Van Buren spent the night at Oak Manor. It was long before he succeeded in bringing the child to consciousness. His mind, however, was still beclouded. He was in high fever and talked deliriously.

"Gracious! if Miss Desmond knew of this," he

said unconsciously, as if speaking to himself.

"She will know it," exclaimed Annie in gloomy decision. "This cannot go on any longer or the children will die."

"Do you write to her, Annie?" asked the physician doubtfully.

"Oh yes, I must write her about the children—she begged me to do so."

"But what can she do?" said the doctor, "she is but a stranger and Mrs. Gordon would not allow her to meddle in any affairs here."

Annie did not answer, her glance went to the floor. She dared not answer.

— 1984 —

Chapter 206

MR. PERRY'S PUNISHMENT

UPON HIS arrival at the copper mines, Philip Gordon found conditions a very great deal worse than he expected. He went into a conference with the manager at once. The story he heard killed all hope. Some labor agitator had come from the East. Within twenty-four hours the seed of dissatisfaction the man sowed, had begun to bear fruit.

There had been a sudden demand for higher wages with a threat of an immediate strike.

"I argued with the men and asked them to give me a week to take the matter up with the board of directors," the manager went on. "But they would not listen. The following day they walked out."

And then, with tears in his eyes, the man told of the ruination which had been wrought by the striking miners.

Drunk with moonshine whiskey, and egged on by the agitator from the East, they had destroyed valuable machinery. Even two of the shafts had been destroyed.

Gordon felt his heart sink within him. The only thing to be done was to make a request of the county officials that State troops be sent to guard the mines and prevent further destruction.

The request was complied with, and then Phil made preparations to go back to Chicago.

As the chief stock holder he had the power to call a special meeting of the directors. It looked as if a half million dollars was required to restore the mines.

Continued in next number

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